

MEMO

TO: Energy and Environment Committee

FROM: Ted Harris, Air Quality Program Manager, 213-236-1916, harrist@scag.ca.gov

DATE: September 1, 2005

SUBJECT: Fine Particle (PM_{2.5}) Conformity Determination Process

SUMMARY:

This memo outlines a proposed process to make a conformity determination for the new fine particle (PM_{2.5}) standard. The new federal conformity regulation for fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) requires the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) to receive approval from the United States Department of Transportation (US DOT) on SCAG's conformity determination on the 2004 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and the 2004 Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) by April 5, 2006 or the region risks a conformity lapse.

BACKGROUND:

Transportation conformity is a federal Clean Air Act requirement that ensures that federally supported highway and transit projects are consistent with ("conform to") a state air quality implementation plan (SIP). Conformity ensures that public health is protected by early consideration of transportation decisions in cities with air quality challenges.

The final PM_{2.5} rule provides new PM_{2.5} nonattainment areas with the requirements for considering PM_{2.5} precursor emissions in transportation conformity determinations.

Transportation conformity for the PM_{2.5} air quality standard will apply in new nonattainment areas on April 5, 2006 – that is, one year after the effective date of their designation. EPA's designations for the new PM_{2.5} standard were effective April 5, 2005, at which point a one-year conformity grace period began.

Key (PM_{2.5}) Requirements:

Nonattainment area designations for the new fine particle (PM_{2.5}) standard became effective on April 5, 2005, and an approved conformity determination is required by April 5, 2006, one year after the effective date. The South Coast Air Basin is the only PM_{2.5} non-attainment area in Southern California.

Table 1: SCAG Region – Fine Particle (PM_{2.5}) Non-attainment Area

| Non-attainment Area | Maximum Attainment Date |
|------------------------------|---|
| South Coast Air Basin (SCAB) | 2010 with a possible 5 year extension to 2015 |

MEMO

Proposed Process for fine particle conformity determination on the 2004 RTP and RTIP

1. Conduct ongoing public participation and interagency consultation.
2. Perform regional emission analysis. $PM_{2.5}$ is a new air quality standard, and requires what is called an "interim emissions test." The interim emissions test requires SCAG to demonstrate that implementing the 2004 RTP and the 2004 RTIP is not expected to cause $PM_{2.5}$ emissions to exceed emissions in year 2002 or future years if the region did not implement the 2004 RTP or 2004 RTIP.
3. Reaffirm the existing conformity findings for the 2004 RTP and 2004 RTIP.
4. Release the draft conformity analyses and documentation for the new $PM_{2.5}$ standard in November 2005 for a 30-day comment period.
5. Hold a public hearing in December 2005.
6. Adopt the resolution making the final Conformity Determination in February 2006.
7. Send SCAG's Conformity Determination to the federal agencies for approval.
8. Approval by federal agencies by April 5, 2006.